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**Testimony to the Judiciary Committee on 3/19/2010
In Support of Bill Number 5521: An Act Concerning Child Welfare and the
Juvenile Justice System and Erasure of Juvenile Records**

Chair
Timothy Everett, Esq.

Executive Director
Maureen Price-Boreland, Esq.

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- *Young Offender

By Maureen Price-Boreland

Good afternoon. My name is Maureen Price-Boreland, Executive Director of Community Partners in Action. I also serve on the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System. I submit this written testimony in support of Bill 5521 with specific emphasis on the issue of Disproportionate Minority Impact.

I testified before this committee exactly four years ago on the issue of Disparate Minority Contact of Juveniles in the Criminal Justice System. I am here again today to raise concerns about this issue.

According to the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System's annual report (2001-2002), "Minority Youth are over represented in every stage of the juvenile justice system.... Delinquency cases involving African American juveniles were more likely to be handled formally than were cases involving white youth or youth of other races Racial differences in the likelihood of formal handling were greatest for drug law violation cases" This extends to status offenses where again, African American youth are more likely to be detained over their white counterparts.

It seems efforts to reduce racial disparity to date have been insufficient. We continue to hear so much about the horrid racial disparities in the adult system. Connecticut must take this problem even more seriously and remedy policies, practices and social norms at the root of the problem in order to break the cycle that will make today's minority juvenile offender tomorrow's DOC inmate.

In support of this bill to reduce disproportionate minority representation in the juvenile justice system, I would urge the committee to support the specific decision point recommendations for action highlighted in the report, **"A Second Reassessment of Disproportionate Minority Contact in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System"**, produced by Spectrum Associates and submitted to the Office of Policy and Management, May 15th, 2009 which, in summary, are as follows:



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The following recommendations are based on the finding of disproportionate minority contact and possible disparate handling of juveniles at the specific decision point addressed.

***All police officers should be trained on the problem of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) and understand:**

- a) Why the role of law enforcement as gatekeepers is important in helping to eliminate disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system.
- b) Why all adolescents tend to test boundaries, challenge authority, and have difficulty controlling impulses and making sound decisions.
- c) How police can communicate more effectively with young people and improve police/youth relations.
- d) What options police have available when dealing with young people.

***Local education agencies (LEAs) should work closely with local law enforcement in developing policies and procedures in order to reduce over-reliance on arrest to handle school disciplinary matters.**

***To reduce disproportionate minority contact (DMC) at detention, the Connecticut General Assembly should enact legislation that prohibits any admission of a juvenile to detention without a court order.**

***As part of its agency DMC assessment process the, Judicial Branch should review in detail its policies, practices, and data concerning decisions by probation officers to charge juveniles with violations of probation and violations of court orders.**

***Prosecutors, both criminal and juvenile, should be trained on the problem of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) and how their decision- making impacts the issue of DMC at various points in the process, particularly at the decision point of transfer to the criminal docket.**

***The Department of Children and Families (DCF) should review its process for making and documenting changes in facility placement and parole decisions for juveniles committed as delinquent to DCF.**

***Data systems of juvenile justice and youth serving agencies should be modified to consistently require the entry of, and the ability to track, data that practitioners and researchers deem important to the juvenile justice decision-making process to facilitate future study on disproportionate minority contact (DMC).**

Thank you for your time.